

## CERTIFICATION MANUAL FOR WISCONSIN PUBLIC LIBRARY DIRECTORS

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Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

## CERTIFICATION MANUAL FOR WISCONSIN PUBLIC LIBRARY DIRECTORS

Developed by The Library Services Team



Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Jill K. Underly, PhD, State Superintendent Madison, Wisconsin This publication is available from:

Division for Libraries and Technology Teresa Schmidt, Public Library Administration Consultant Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction 201 W. Washington Ave. Madison, WI 53703 608-266-7270

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# **Table of Contents**

Table of Contents	3
Acknowledgments	4
Introduction	5
Background	5
Statutory Compliance and System Membership	5
Library Board Responsibilities	6
General Requirements	6
Grade Level	7
Grade I Certificate	7
Grade II Certificate	7
Grade III Certificate	8
Voluntary certification	8
Status	9
Regular Status	9
Temporary Status	9
Provisional Status	10
Education Equivalencies	10
Initial Certification (First-Time Applicants)	11
Certification Decision Tree	12
Items to Include with Your Application	13
Initial Grade I Regular	13
Initial Grade I Temporary	13
Initial Grade II Regular	13
Initial Grade II Temporary	13
Initial Grade III Regular	14
Initial Grade III Temporary	14
Lapsed certification	14
Certification Renewal	15
Temporary Certification Renewal Requirements	15
Regular and Provisional Renewal Requirements	15
Continuing Education Contact Hours	16
Continuing Education Categories	17
Category A: For-Credit Continuing Education Activities	17
Category B: Noncredit Continuing Education Activities	17
Category C: Self-Directed Continuing Education Activities	17
Records Responsibilities	19
Appeals	19

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Laurie Freund Coordinator of Library Development Bridges Library System

Meredith Lowe Continuing Education Program Manager UW-Madison, Information School

Joy Schwarz, Retired Continuing Education and Training Librarian Winnefox Library System

Tracy Vreeke Director Nicolet Federated Library System

## DPI, Division for Libraries and Technology Staff

Shannon Schultz Former Public Library Administration Consultant Former Public Librarian Certification Coordinator

Teresa Schmidt Public Library Administration Consultant Public Librarian Certification Coordinator

Benjamin Miller Director, Library Services Team

# Introduction

<u>Wis. Stat. sec. 43.09(1)</u> and <u>Wis. Admin. Code PI 6.03(2)</u> require that administrators of public libraries (with the exception of Milwaukee Public Library) and public library systems be properly certified by the Division for Libraries and Technology. The "administrator" of a library or library system is the person appointed by a library board under <u>sec. 43.58(4)</u>, or by a library system board under <u>sec. 43.17(4)</u>, to direct and administer the public library or regional public library system. Often the terms "library administrator," "library director," and "head librarian" are used interchangeably. Henceforth, such administrators are referred to as directors.

## Background

<u>The Wisconsin Legislature has declared "that it is the policy of the state to provide laws for the</u> <u>development and improvement of public libraries...."</u> Public librarian certification has been part of Wisconsin law since 1921, when the legislature passed the first comprehensive state public librarian certification law to assure a high level of professional management and administration of Wisconsin's library resources, programs, and services.

Wisconsin's public librarian certification law reflects a continuing interest in ensuring that qualified personnel direct Wisconsin's public libraries and regional public library systems. The law requires a broad educational background, as well as coursework designed to focus on the issues and concerns relevant in a public library setting. The law also recognizes the need for public librarians to increase their skills and knowledge and be prepared for the challenges and responsibilities of administering libraries and library systems that are responsive to their communities' changing needs.

### **Statutory Compliance and System Membership**

Certification of public library directors is a public library system membership requirement under <u>Wis. Stat. sec. 43.15(4)(c)(6)</u>. The library system is primarily responsible for monitoring and enforcing compliance with statutory membership requirements. Any library that does not have an appropriately certified library director is noncompliant with state statute; however, such libraries may be shown consideration if there is evidence of the library board actively recruiting a new director.

Penalties to public libraries for ongoing noncompliance may include denial of state and federal grant opportunities, a reduction in system services, or expulsion from the library system.

### Library Board Responsibilities

When recruiting a director, library boards should specify that eligibility for Wisconsin public librarian certification at the appropriate level (or higher) is required. The employment contract and/or letter of appointment should specify that the employed director will obtain and maintain the appropriate certification as a condition of employment.

The Division for Libraries and Technology recommends that libraries budget annual funds for the continuing education needed to maintain the library director's certification. Such budgetary needs may include continuing education tuition or registration fees, paid leave time, and other expenses required to pursue necessary continuing education.

# **General Requirements**

A public librarian certificate consists of two parts: the grade level and its status.

Wisconsin public librarian certification grade level requirements are based on municipal and county populations reported in the U.S. Census Bureau's most recent federal decennial census. Urban populations require a higher level of general and specialized education (*Grade I*), whereas more rural populations require a lower level of general education and fewer library-specific courses (*Grades II* and *III*, depending on the total population of the municipality or municipalities that established the library).

The status of a certificate indicates whether all educational requirements have been met. A *regular* certificate signifies that the certificant has met all the general education and library-specific education requirements for that grade level. A *temporary* certificate signifies the holder has met all the general education requirements but has not yet met all the library-specific education requirements for that grade level. A *third status, provisional,* is only issued by the Division for Libraries and Technology in limited circumstances and may not be applied for or requested.

**Directors must be appropriately certified or eligible for certification upon employment.** The statuses considered appropriate for new employment include regular certification and temporary certification. To be compliant, directors eligible for regular certification must apply within one month of employment, if not already certified. Directors not yet eligible for regular certification must apply for temporary certification within three months of employment.

The grade level and status requirements for certification are described in more detail below and are also summarized in this <u>Summary of Wisconsin Public Librarian Certification Requirements</u>.

### **Grade Level**

The following sections outline the requirements for each grade level available under the Wisconsin Public Librarian Certification program. The statutory grade level for a public library indicates the *minimum acceptable level* for that library's director in order for the library to remain in compliance with statutes and its public library system membership requirements. A new hire may qualify for a higher certification level than required. A library board may even prioritize seeking a director with a certification level higher than the minimum required. Such hiring practices are at the discretion of local library boards, as long as the minimum required level is met.

Each grade level includes both general education requirements and library-specific education requirements. General education requirements must be from a college or university approved by an accrediting association of more than statewide standing. The U.S. Department of Education maintains a <u>Database of Accredited Postsecondary Institutions and Programs</u> that may provide more information about the accreditation status of colleges and universities in the United States.

### Grade I Certificate

Directors of public library systems and directors of municipal, joint, and county public libraries with total populations of 6,000 or more are required to hold Grade I certificates.

**General education** requirements for Grade I certificates are a bachelor's degree in any field from a college or university approved by an accrediting association of more than statewide standing.

**Library-specific education** requirements for Grade I certificates are a master's degree in a library and information studies program that has been <u>accredited by the American Library Association</u>.

### Grade II Certificate

Directors of municipal, joint, and county public libraries with total populations between 3,000 and 5,999 are required to hold at least a Grade II certificate. (They may hold a Grade I certificate, if qualified.)

**General education** requirements for Grade II certificates are a bachelor's degree in any field from a college or university approved by an accrediting association of more than statewide standing.

**Library-specific education** requirements for Grade II certificates are 12 semester credits of coursework or the equivalent, as approved by the Division, in the following areas:

- Basic public library administration
- Advanced public library administration
- Organization and management of collections
- Public and community services

These courses may be taken as part of the general education requirements prior to certification or may be taken in addition to general education requirements.

Individuals who have a bachelor's degree with a minor in library science are only required to take the advanced public library administration course in addition to the general education requirements.

### Grade III Certificate

Directors of municipal, joint, and county public libraries with total populations under 3,000 are required to hold at least a Grade III certificate. (They may hold a Grade I or II certificate, if qualified.)

**General education** requirements for Grade III certificates are at least 54 semester credits at a college or university approved by an accrediting association of more than statewide standing. A minimum of 27 of these credits must be in the liberal arts and sciences, which includes courses in the behavioral and social sciences, fine arts, humanities, natural sciences, and mathematics.

**Library-specific education** requirements for Grade III certificates are 12 semester credits of coursework or the equivalent, as approved by the Division, in the following areas:

- Basic public library administration
- Advanced public library administration
- Organization and management of collections
- Public and community services

These courses may be taken as part of the general education requirements prior to certification or may be taken in addition to general education requirements.

### Voluntary certification

Public librarian certification is not required by law for library personnel other than the director, so certification requirements were designed specifically for library directors. Persons other than library directors may apply for any grade level and type of certification for which they are eligible. Such voluntary certification will be maintained in accordance with the same principles and procedures that apply to mandatory certification for public library directors.

### Status

Three certification statuses are available in Wisconsin: regular, temporary, and provisional.

### **Regular Status**

An individual must obtain certification with regular status to be considered a fully certified public librarian in Wisconsin. A certificate with regular status is issued for a five-year period only after all general and library-specific education requirements have been met. It may be renewed upon evidence that satisfies the Division for Libraries and Technology that the certificant has participated in continuing education in librarianship directly related to the position held or will permit advancement in the profession. For more details, see the chapter on <u>Certification</u> <u>Renewal</u>.

Directors eligible for regular certification must apply within one month of employment, if not already certified, in order for the library to remain in compliance with statutory requirements.

#### **Temporary Status**

The Division for Libraries and Technology may grant certificates with temporary status to enable applicants to complete their library-specific education requirements. A certificate with temporary status is only valid for a limited time before it must be replaced with a regular certificate.

Applicants must meet all general education requirements for their desired certification level before applying for temporary certification. Applicants must apply for temporary status within three months of employment as a library director to be eligible for such certification. The Division will deny any application for temporary status received more than three months after the start date of employment as director.

An applicant for Grade I certification who is currently enrolled in an ALA-accredited master's program in library science with less than one year remaining before graduation may apply for temporary status, subject to Division approval. The applicant must provide a student record indicating all taken and remaining courses. A temporary Grade I certificate is valid for one year and is not renewable.

An applicant for Grade II or III certification may apply for temporary status, subject to Division approval, only when all general education requirements have been met. A temporary Grade II or III certificate is valid for one year and may be renewed up to three times for a total of four years of temporary certification, provided that the applicant has completed a basic public library administration course within the first year of employment as director and has taken at least one course each subsequent year. A temporary certificate is not renewable a fourth time.

An applicant for temporary Grade II certification who holds a minor in library science need only complete three semester credits in advanced public library administration or the equivalent, as approved by the Division. Because directors who hold a temporary certification must complete

at least one course per year to meet the temporary status renewal requirements, this temporary certificate is only valid for one year and is not renewable.

All applicants for temporary status must submit with their initial application a schedule outlining their plan for taking their required library education courses, including the educational institution, semester, and year. Refer to educational institution websites for availability of these courses. This schedule of course completion is subject to approval by the Division.

A temporary certificate may be awarded to an applicant who was previously certified with regular status but **whose certificate has lapsed for more than one year**, provided the applicant was not a director in Wisconsin during that period. The applicant must meet the basic requirements for regular certification at the appropriate grade level. An applicant who receives a temporary certificate under these conditions shall complete at least 20 contact hours of continuing education during the temporary certification period. The certificate is valid for up to one year and is not renewable. The applicant will be eligible for regular certification upon completion of 20 contact hours of continuing education.

### **Provisional Status**

The Division for Libraries and Technology may grant provisional status to a public library director who was originally certified at the appropriate grade level but is no longer properly certified due to population growth of the jurisdiction in which their public library is located. This change may have occurred as a result of population growth of the municipality that established the library or due to the formation of a joint municipal library under <u>Wis. Stat. sec. 43.53</u>.

The Division will notify public library directors affected by such population increases and the upgrade will become effective at that time. No request for provisional status will be accepted or required. Certificates with provisional status are valid for a five-year period, and may be renewed every five years thereafter, provided the certificant continues to work at the same library and complies with continuing education requirements for recertification. If the certificant becomes employed at a different library or if the library falls into noncompliance, the certificate will revert to the original grade for which the certificant met all qualifications.

## **Education Equivalencies**

The Division for Libraries and Technology is allowed discretion in determining equivalencies for library-specific education requirements under <u>Wis. Admin. Code PI 6.03</u>. This does not apply to general education requirements, which are statutory minimum requirements. Judgments on library-specific education equivalencies will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

# **Initial Certification** (First-Time Applicants)

Individuals are encouraged to apply for the highest certification level they qualify for, even if it is higher than the level required for their current position. The <u>Certification Decision Tree</u> may help applicants determine which grade level and status is the most suitable for initial certification.

Applicants must supply all qualifying credentials to the Division for review. When an applicant has supplied all relevant documentation, as described below, and has met all certification requirements for the appropriate grade level and status, the application will be approved, and a certificate will be issued to the applicant via email. The appropriate library system continuing education validator will also be notified.

Detailed instructions on how to apply for public librarian certification can be found on the <u>For</u> <u>Library Directors</u> section of the Library Services Team website.

Questions regarding the application process or about the public librarian certification program in general may be directed to <u>LibraryCertification@dpi.wi.gov</u>.

Wisconsin Public Librarian Certification Decision Tree

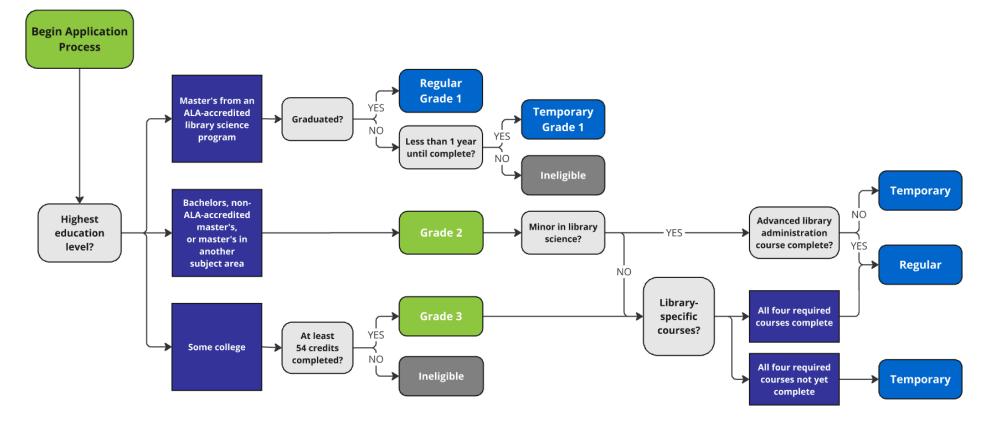


Figure 1: Certification Decision Tree

### Items to Include with Your Application

#### Initial Regular Grade I

To apply for a regular Grade I certificate, you will need:

• A transcript or diploma demonstrating a conferred master's degree from a library and information studies program at an <u>ALA-accredited institution</u>.

#### Initial Temporary Grade I

To apply for a temporary Grade I certificate, you will need:

• A transcript or student record showing you have accrued enough credits toward your master's degree from a library and information studies program at an ALA-accredited institution to obtain the degree within one year.

#### Initial Regular Grade II

To apply for a regular Grade II certificate, you will need:

- A transcript or diploma demonstrating a conferred bachelor's degree in any subject, or a master's degree in a field other than library science,
- Proof of completion of all four required library-specific courses, and
- If you hold a minor in library science, proof of completion of an advanced public library administration course in addition to a transcript or diploma demonstrating your library science minor, in lieu of proof of completion of the four library-specific courses.

If you have not completed all required library-specific courses, you must apply for a certificate with temporary status.

#### Initial Temporary Grade II

To apply for a temporary Grade II certificate, you will need:

- A transcript or a diploma demonstrating a conferred bachelor's degree in any subject, or a master's degree in a field other than library science,
- Proof of completion of any of the four required library-specific courses already taken, if any, and
- A schedule indicting the educational institution, semester, and year you intend to take each required library specific course not already completed.

If you possess a minor in library science, the schedule need only include a plan for the completion of an advanced public library administration course.

#### Initial Regular Grade III

To apply for a regular Grade III certificate, you will need:

- All transcripts necessary to demonstrate that you have completed a minimum of 54 semester credits from a university or college, including at least 27 credits in the liberal arts, and
- Proof of completion of all four required library-specific courses.

If you have not completed all four required library-specific courses, you must apply for a certificate with temporary status.

#### Initial Temporary Grade III

To apply for a temporary Grade III certificate, you will need:

- All transcripts necessary to demonstrate you have completed a minimum of 54 semester credits from a university or college, including at least 27 credits in the liberal arts,
- Proof of completion of any of the four required library-specific courses already taken, if any, and
- A schedule indicating the educational institution, semester, and year that you intend to take each required library specific course not already completed.

### Lapsed certification

To apply for a temporary Grade I, II, or III certificate after your certificate has lapsed for at least one year during a period in which you were not a library director in Wisconsin, you will need:

• A statement describing the approximate dates of the lapse in your certification and affirming that you were not employed as a public library director or public library system director in Wisconsin during that time.

# **Certification Renewal**

Participants in the public librarian certification program are not considered fully certified until they have met all requirements of certification with regular status. Once regular status is achieved, the renewal requirements for all certificants are the same, regardless of grade level.

## **Temporary Certification Renewal Requirements**

Temporary Grade II and III certificates are valid for one year and may be renewed up to three times after initial certification, for a maximum of four years. Renewal of a temporary certificate will only be granted if a basic public library administration course is completed within the first year, and at least one course is completed each subsequent year until all four required library courses are completed. Proof of completion of any required course taken within the current certification year must be submitted with the renewal application. While those with temporary certification status may attend continuing education activities such as conferences and other training events, no continuing education activities are required during this time, and such activities should not be reported as part of temporary certification renewal.

Temporary Grade I certificates, temporary Grade II certificates granted to applicants with a minor in library science, and certificates granted to applicants with lapsed certification are valid for one year and may not be renewed. Applicants who hold these certificates must complete the requirements and apply for regular certification at the end of the one-year temporary certification period.

When all library course requirements for the appropriate regular certification have been met, an applicant may then apply for a regular certificate.

### **Regular and Provisional Renewal Requirements**

Regular and provisional certificates are valid for five years and may be renewed upon evidence which satisfies the Division for Libraries and Technology the certificant has participated in continuing education (CE), which is either directly related to the position held or will permit advancement in the profession. CE for the purpose of certification renewal is interpreted as education beyond the initial certification requirement. The CE requirement is intended to enhance job competence by keeping librarians up to date on advancements in the field and improving their professional skills.

These activities may consist of library system workshops, college courses, conference sessions, and a variety of other educational programs. CE need not be limited to library subjects or the offerings of library education programs but must be related to the present position or to career advancement in the library profession. In addition, only learning activities planned, coordinated, administered, and evaluated in terms of learning objectives qualify for certification renewal.

To fulfill regular certification renewal requirements, certificants in all grades must participate in one hundred (100) hours of continuing education, at least ten of which must be technology related, during the five-year certification period immediately preceding the renewal of the certificate.

Each continuing education activity must be classified into a category, based on its source and content. Each category type may have a minimum or maximum number of allowable contact hours per certification period. See the category descriptions and requirements below, which are also summarized in this <u>Summary of Required CE Contact Hours for Wisconsin Public Librarian</u> <u>Certification Renewal</u>.

A qualifying technology-related activity may fall into any category as a distinct activity, or it may be included as a component of a course, workshop, or program. The applicant must work with the library system CE validator to determine how much of an activity is technology related. Such learning activities may include training on a newly installed module or major upgrade of an integrated library system, website design, and cybersecurity training, among many others.

**Every year**, certificants should report their CE activities to their library CE validator. Each CE activity should be documented on its own <u>Continuing Education Activity Report</u> (form PI-2453), and each of these activities should be listed on an accompanying <u>Annual Summation of</u> <u>Continuing Education Activities</u> (form PI-2454). The library system CE validator will review all these activities and validate the summation form with a signature. Validators may, because of conflict of interest, defer validation to the Division.

**Every five years**, certificants must submit all validated annual summation forms to the Division as part of the certification renewal process. Applicants should submit their applications and validated summations during the final month of expiry of their certificate, to remain in compliance with certification requirements. For example, if a director's certificate is set to expire on the last day of February, the director should submit their application for renewal in February of that year.

## **Continuing Education Contact Hours**

For the purposes of public librarian certification, a contact hour consists of sixty minutes of participation in a learning activity. This is not to be confused with CEU, a common unit of measure of academic credits, which consists of ten contact hours of CE per CEU.

## **Continuing Education Categories**

Each CE activity must be classified into a category based on its source and content. Of the one hundred CE contact hours required for certification renewal, no more than thirty can be earned in Category C during the five-year certification period. There is no maximum limit on the number of hours earned in categories A or B.

### **Category A: For-Credit Continuing Education Activities**

Category A includes all CE courses for which academic credit is awarded by a college or university approved by an accrediting association of more than statewide standing. Courses determined by the Division to be equivalent to courses offered for academic credit, such as those offered by the University of Wisconsin–Madison Information School Continuing Education Services, are also included in this category.

Contact hours earned in Category A must be submitted to the library system validator with formal documentation from the sponsoring agency, such as a transcript or certificate of course completion.

#### **Category B: Noncredit Continuing Education Activities**

Category B includes activities for which no academic credit is awarded but which are preplanned CE activities on specific topics offered by agencies, organizations, and professional associations and are planned, coordinated, administered, and evaluated in terms of learning objectives.

Participants in Category B activities must document their participation by submitting a Continuing Education Activity Report form to validators that includes the provider, program title, description of program, date(s), location, and number of contact hours. Category B includes activities such as:

- In person workshops, seminars, institutes, and lectures
- State or national library association programs
- Webinars, hybrid trainings, and fully digital content planned, coordinated, administered, and evaluated by the content creator in terms of learning objectives. (Trainings that contain no learning objectives defined by the content creator may still qualify as CE activities under Category C.)

### **Category C: Self-Directed Continuing Education Activities**

Category C includes self-directed CE activities for which no academic credit or equivalencies are awarded, and which are not preplanned CE activities on specific topics offered by agencies, organizations, and professional associations. The learning activities, however, must be planned, coordinated, administered, and evaluated in terms of learning objectives by the participant and the system CE validator as part of the pre-approval process for Category C activities. Final determination of the number of contact hours to be awarded for activities in Category C will be made by the certificant's system CE validator based on actual hours of continuing education activities, but not to exceed ten contact hours awarded per learning activity. (Each bulleted item below provides an example of a single learning activity.) No more than thirty contact hours can be earned in Category C during the five-year certification period.

Certificants interested in pursuing Category C activities must submit a <u>Self-Directed Continuing</u> <u>Education Activity Proposal</u> to their library system CE validator for pre-approval. Per the terms of the approved proposal, participants must document their participation by submitting a Continuing Education Activity Report form to the CE validator upon completion of the activity.

Learning activities that may qualify as Category C activities, if the above conditions are met, include:

- Reviews of books in the field of library science or related to librarianship authored and published in the library/media-related field and read primarily by those in the profession
- Instruction (courses, workshops, seminars, presentations, poster sessions, conferences, programs) given to information, library, or media-related groups
- Participation in professional library association activities of a significant nature, such as serving as chair, president, or other officer of the association or a major division; serving on a major committee; or serving on a literary awards committee
- Listening to or viewing a webinar or other form of media providing a workshop presentation or conference program. (If done as part of a group situation sponsored by an agency or organization and with organized discussion, this may qualify under Category B.)
- Exchange-of-position programs, such as learning in another library for a specified period
- Internships for which no academic credit is awarded
- Consultation or one-on-one instruction received
- Publications—a book or a chapter thereof, a paper, or an article—authored and published in the library or media-related field and read primarily by those in the profession

Examples of activities that do not qualify as CE for certification renewal include:

- Training or activities involving regular library operations or procedures
- Program planning and staff meetings
- A director's orientation of new staff or trustees
- Professional association activities that are routine in nature, such as serving on a standing committee
- Preparation of internal manuals or other internal documents
- Reading professional journals
- Writing published reviews of books not related to library science or librarianship

## **Records Responsibilities**

**Certificants are responsible** for keeping their own records of CE activities on individual continuing education activity reports, submitting copies of the Continuing Education Activity Report forms and Annual Summation of Continuing Education Activities forms to public library system validators annually, and applying for recertification to the Division for Libraries and Technology every five years.

Because individuals, not libraries, become certified, certificants are encouraged to include personal contact information with their certification application and to update that contact information with the Division for Libraries and Technology, as needed. Updates may be sent to LibraryCertification@dpi.wi.gov.

**Public library system continuing education validators** review, and accept or reject, the continuing education activity reports and annual summation forms of CE participants. Validators keep copies of annual summation forms for their files and return the originals to the certificate holders. System copies are considered convenience copies and may or may not be subject to retention, depending on the library system's adopted records retention schedule.

The **Division for Libraries and Technology** approves applications and issues individual public librarian certificates. Copies of the annual summation forms, approved by the public library system validators, must accompany the application. As the issuing agency, the Division holds the official records, and retains public librarian certification records in accordance with state retention requirements.

# Appeals

Applicants whose certification or requested grade levels were denied by the Division for Libraries and Technology may appeal the Division's decision by submitting a written or emailed request for a hearing with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, under the authority of <u>Wis. Stat. sec. 227.01(3)(a)</u> and <u>s. 227.42</u>.

System continuing education validators may seek the Division's opinion for an interpretation of the certification manual regarding the validity of specific learning activities. Applicants for certification renewal may also request assistance from the Division's public librarian certification coordinator if questions arise over the validity of specific learning activities. All requests may be submitted to LibraryCertification@dpi.wi.gov.